

Reflection – 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B: November 14-15, 2015 – Louise Lafond

I was very apprehensive when I first looked at today's readings and Gospel. I know that the time before Advent is filled with apocalyptic texts, but I must confess that I have a lot of difficulty in reconciling the “Son of Man coming in the clouds” and the Jesus of healing the sick and feeding the hungry.

As the author of the Letter to the Hebrews states it so well, “Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins.” So what now? Is it not done? The classic theological answer is: Yes and no.

Yes, it is done, or as Jesus said it so well himself, “It is finished.” The sacrifice has been made and because of it we are blessed and are assured everlasting life as “...he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.”

On the other hand, no, it is not done: Take a look at the creation that surrounds us, it is constantly becoming, changing, altering, dying, birthing, evolving. We, in our faith communities, continue to memorialize that sacrifice which took place almost two thousand years ago. Why are we not done?

We are not done because we are also becoming, changing, altering, dying, birthing, evolving. If members of the early church were to walk into this building what parts would they recognize as part of their community? Materially, nothing. What about the Eucharistic Celebration? Most probably, the Eucharist itself. Other than the Eucharist, I can only hope those members would recognize us, the body of the Church.

However, unlike the earliest members of the early church we have been unable to sustain the “Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.” Writing in the early 1970's the great (and blessed) theologian Edward Schillebeeckx said:

So the sheer strangeness, for us, of the New Testament ideas about salvation-to-come can hardly be denied. We do not look for a celestial son of man to appear at any moment as our judge and set up a messianic commonwealth – concerning which we might enquire anxiously, as people did then, whether Christians already dead will nevertheless have part in it.... We may be rather hasty in our judgement here. One can, after all, wait quite a time for a train that fails to come. But anyone who in this day and age has waited by the track for a scheduled train, not just for hours but for days and weeks – what for us is centuries – when the train simply fails to materialize, can no longer psychologically maintain or substantiate his 'train-expectancy'. Anyone will conclude soon enough that trains have ceased to run on this particular track. The picture of Christ as it comes to us in the New Testament is in the first instance, therefore, actually weird – not just in the sense of the strange, scandalizing quality inherent in God's peculiar and divine dealings with man that surpass human wisdom; but strange or 'queer' in a purely human, cultural-religious sense.¹

So, where do we go from here as Christians? We create new meaning about Christ's nearness to us “...at the very gates,” without letting go of the promise of his coming again. We are forced to create a belief and practice, that started as a contingency, but is now our everyday faith.

So, until that day or hour which no one knows, let us follow Jesus in the best ways we know how: by loving our neighbour; being peacemakers; caring for the sick; clothing the naked; loving our enemies; feeding the hungry; caring for the poor; being kind and merciful, and leave aside the business of our resurrection until he comes again.

1 Schillebeeckx, Edward. *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*. Trans: Hubert Hoskins, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1991, p. 23.